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Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by International Indian Treaty Council, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) has advocated for over 30 years in the international arena for the sovereignty and self-determination of indigenous peoples, and the recognition and protection of indigenous rights, treaties, traditional cultures and sacred lands.

We welcome the call for stronger promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for States accountability in their observance, as in the resolution by which the General Assembly established the Human Rights Council as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly (General Assembly resolution 60/251). We appreciate that in calling for this reform, the Secretary-General has emphasized the need to "mainstream" human rights, along with development and security, as one of three principal goals of the United Nations (see A/59/2005/Add.3, annex, para. 1).

In this light, we address the themes for the 2006 High-Level Segment and Coordination Segment of the Economic and Social Council: "Creating an environment at the national and international levels, conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development"; and "Sustained economic growth for social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger".

We also note the Heads of State and Government declaration at the 2005 World Summit:

> "We strongly support a fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our national and international macro-economic policies as well as poverty reduction strategies. These measures should also encompass the elimination of child labour. We also resolve to protect the human rights of workers".[1]

While sharing concerns for eradicating poverty and protecting human rights of workers, especially children, IITC does not agree that greater participation in globalization will resolve these concerns. For indigenous peoples, jobs as factory or plantation workers in a globalized economy are not the solution to poverty, hunger or the violation of their human rights. Instead, indigenous peoples and their lands continue to be the fodder that feeds the insatiable transnational hunger for natural resources and cheap labour, exacerbating poverty, accelerating land loss and undermining food security.

This model omits any reference to the rights of those who chose to maintain traditional subsistence ways of life which have sustained them since time immemorial. Human rights and eradication of poverty for indigenous peoples can only be achieved in the context of their collective well-being, based on the viability of their traditional cultures and languages, communities' health and the strength of their relationship to their traditional lands. Indicators of well-being must be defined by indigenous peoples themselves as a fundamental aspect of their self-determination.

[1] See http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2006/hls2006/preparatory.html.

We therefore welcome the current efforts of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to develop indicators of well-being for indigenous peoples. We call upon ECOSOC and the UN system, as well as States, agencies and development institutions to fully recognize and take into account the results of this groundbreaking effort as an alternative to definitions of poverty and development based on the needs of the global economy and the multinational corporations.